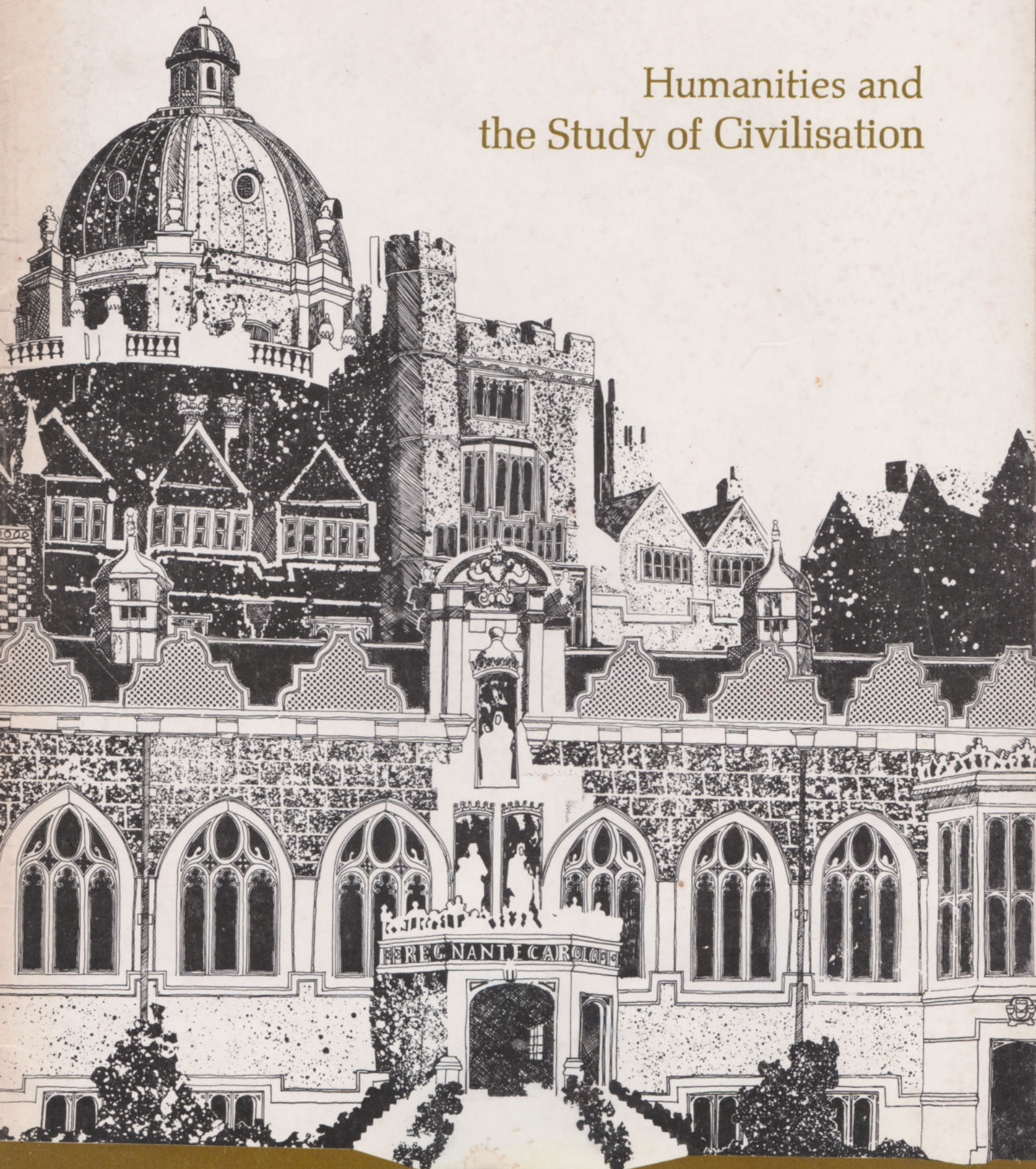




Humanities and the Study of Civilisation





The Open University

Humanities: A Foundation Course **Unit 1** *Introduction 1*

HUMANITIES AND THE STUDY OF CIVILISATION

*Prepared by John Ferguson and Arthur Marwick for
the Arts Foundation Course Team*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The first four weeks of this Foundation Course in the Humanities are introductory. During them we hope to examine some key-terms, such as *civilisation* and *culture*, and to raise in your minds some questions about the relationship between historical events, technological changes and social organisation on one side, and intellectual, artistic, musical and literary developments on the other. This week is an introduction to that, and this paragraph is thus an introduction to an introduction!

1.2 During these four weeks you will not be required to submit any assignments for marking and correction. There will be exercises for you to do from time to time as you work through the correspondence material, and after you have done them you will be able to read our comments on the questions, and either be confirmed in what you have written, or have your attention drawn to points which you have missed.

We are not expecting you to memorise the material which you read. University work does not – or should not – depend on how much you can stuff into your memory, but on whether you can apply the principles involved in any piece of work. The exercises are designed to show you whether you have in fact succeeded in grasping these principles. If you make mistakes you should look back and ask yourself, where you went wrong and why, so that you do not make similar mistakes in future. Remember, however, that in much work in the field of humanities there is no simple ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, but opinions backed by evidence. Where this is true you are, as the saying goes, entitled to your own opinion – *if, and only if, you can support that opinion by a reasoned and clear adducing of evidence for it without neglecting evidence against it.* Can you hope to persuade a reasonable man who has no previous views on the subject that the balance of evidence is with you against a reasoned account of other opinions?

1.3 The thirty-six weeks of the Foundation Course fall into five major sections. You may find it useful to see how the introduction will develop and how it fits in to the whole. The numbers refer to the weeks of the original thirty-six-week course.

1-4 INTRODUCTION

- 1 Introduction: definition of terms: a brief historical account of humane education.
- 2 The Yorubas of Nigeria: an introduction to a non-European culture.¹
- 3 Technology, society, religion, and the arts: some questions.
- 4 The artist and society.

5-16 DISCIPLINES AND THEIR METHODS

An introduction to methods of study used in history, literature, the visual arts and music.

¹ Omitted from the Foundation Course after 1971.

17-28 CASE STUDIES

A series of six case studies, each lasting two weeks, enabling you to apply the discipline and methods you have been studying.

29-36 INDUSTRIALISATION AND SOCIETY

An extended case study, lasting eight weeks.

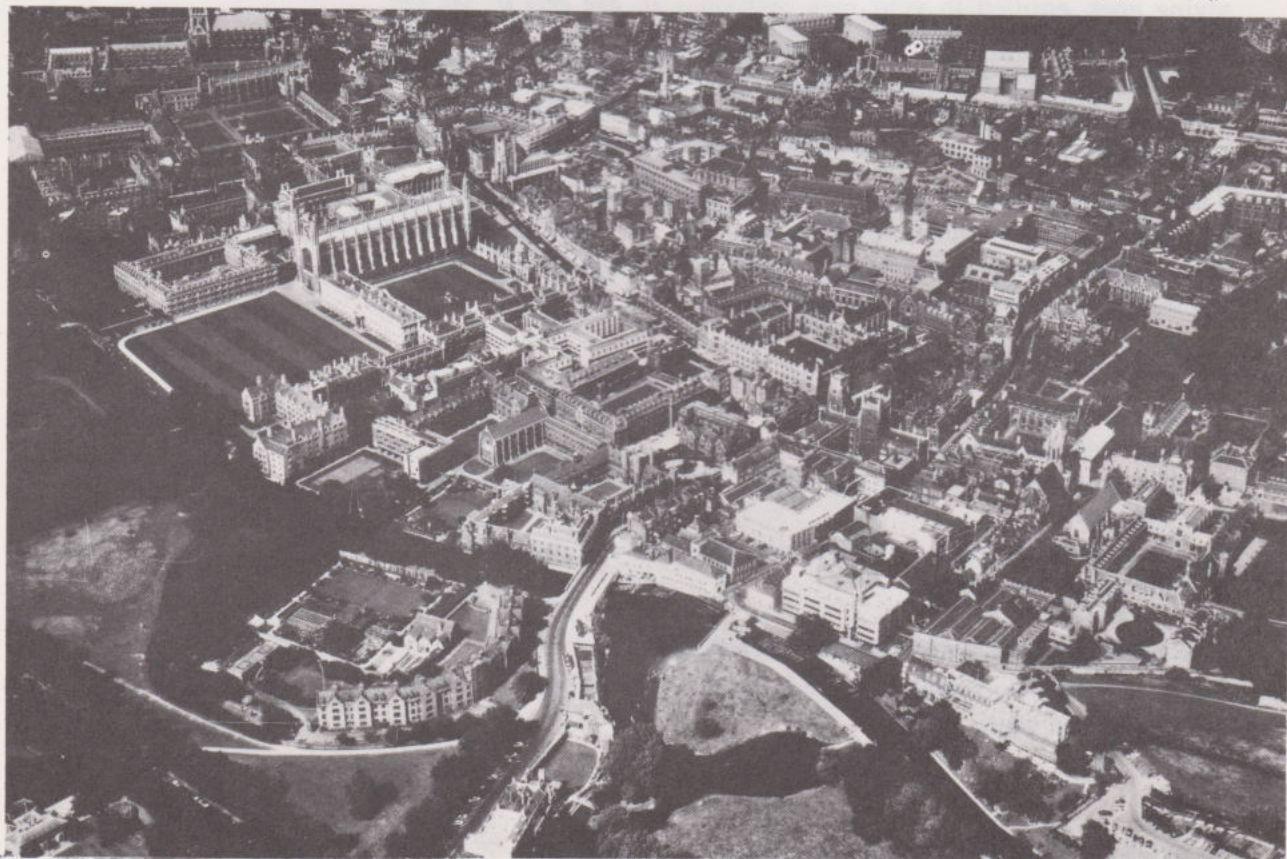
In addition you will be doing a systematic course in logic, which will require of you an hour's work each two weeks.

The four weeks of introduction thus set the background to all that comes after.

- 1.4 The material for your first week's work includes a television programme and a radio programme. The television programme is not directly connected with your study material for this week, but is an introduction to the course as a whole: in it you will meet the members of the faculty of Arts who have been responsible for preparing this written material and the radio and television programmes, and be enabled to see something of the way in which we have set about our business. The radio programme is directly connected with this week's study-material. We have asked Professor Asa Briggs, a distinguished historian and educationalist, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sussex, to speak on educational developments in the humanities, and Derek Hart to discuss with him and with myself the way in which the Open University fits in with these developments.
- 1.5 We are not expecting that the material before you will occupy your full ten hours, and urge you to get on with some of your general reading.
- 1.6 This correspondence material has been prepared by John Ferguson and Arthur Marwick in consultation with Derek Rowntree.

J. F.

Fig 1 The University of Cambridge



HUMANITIES AND THE STUDY OF CIVILISATION

2.0 A BRIEF HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF HUMANE EDUCATION WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON BRITAIN

It must be made clear that this is a highly selective account. There is nothing, for example, about the universities of Ancient China, or the great Islamic centres of learning. There is nothing about contemporary universities in France, or new developments in Africa.

2.1 Greece and Rome

- 2.1.1 Higher education in Europe began effectively in Greece in the fifth century B.C. in response to the wave of optimism which followed the military victory over the Persians in 480–79 B.C., the leisure enjoyed by the citizen-aristocracy with rising standards of living, and the demands made on the individuals who wished to be politically effective by a system in which all decisions were taken after rhetorical persuasion in a mass-assembly. The response came from a group called 'sophists'. The word became a term of disapproval: it originally meant 'expert' or 'professor'. Many of them were genuinely expert. They offered, for fees, courses in a wide variety of disciplines, including mathematics, literary criticism and athletics. More generally, they offered to teach *arete* (*a-re-te*, three syllables), a not easily translatable word meaning approximately 'excellence'. This sounds like, and too easily became, a course on "How to be Top". To be Top in fifth-century Greece meant being an effective speaker. Out of this came research of genuine importance on the effect of different rhythms on an audience, and exact distinctions between words. But coupled as it often was with a moral and religious scepticism it might too readily become a course in persuasion, without regard to whether the course advocated was right or wrong.

Socrates, whom we shall be meeting later, was regarded by his contemporaries as one of these sophists. He, or his supporters, claimed that he was different in that (a) he did not charge fees (though his associates did in fact support him); (b) he did not teach, he only questioned; (c) he was chiefly concerned about the ethical question of the rightness or wrongness of any course.

It will be noticed that education was related to political and social life. Science did not play any part. There was no preparation for it. Elementary and secondary education had as focal points that which the Greeks called *music* and *gymnastic*. Music meant anything to do with the Muses and embraced what we would call literature and music; gymnastic corresponded to our P.E. There was, however, scientific training in one field. The skill of the doctor was preserved within close-knit guilds with apprentices, and it is about this time that it seems to have become more systematic. There was something approaching Colleges of Medicine on the islands of Sicily in the west and Cos in the east. The latter was associated with the famous Hippocrates: the 'Hippocratic oath' is still the cornerstone of medical ethics: treatment was based on the careful, clinical collection of case-histories.

- 2.1.2 The residential university began at Athens in the fourth century B.C., and it was a training-ground for statesmen. There were two rival establishments, headed by Plato (427–347 B.C.) and Isocrates (436–338 B.C.), both men unusually long-lived. Plato taught in a district called the Academy. The word 'academic' may be used to mean

'scholarly' but it also may be used to mean 'impractical'. For Plato the world around us was unreal, inconstant, changing, an imperfect copy of true reality. We have never seen two objects which are absolutely equal; yet there is such a thing as equality. We have never seen an act which is perfectly just; yet there is such a thing as justice. The statesman must therefore learn to direct his mind away from the imperfections of this world and fix it on perfection. The best means to this is geometry, which deals with the perfect circles and triangles which we can only roughly sketch. So over the door of his university Plato wrote words which might be freely translated "All hope abandon ye who enter here without knowledge of geometry". But mathematics was intended as the groundwork for practical statesmanship. Philosophy, literally "the love of wisdom", was for Plato a comprehensive term. We don't know much about the way the Academy worked: we know that he lectured occasionally, and that there were seminar discussions, and we can trace an interest in fields which we should call religion, metaphysics, ethics, educational theory, political theory, linguistic analysis, literary criticism; there is also some science, but apart from a desire to define, it is speculative not practical.

In Isocrates's university, of which we know much less, we can trace some distinctive features. The staple diet was literary: that is to say both literary criticism and rhetoric, the latter embracing both rhetorical theory and what we might today call creative writing, if we remember that all ancient writing was designed to be heard, not



Fig. 2 Plato

scanned silently. The strong creative element marks it off from much modern university work in similar fields. Another difference was the emphasis on ethics. Isocrates's students were left a good deal to themselves: their success or failure was in their own hands.

Plato had a brilliant student from the north of Greece, Aristotle (384–322 B.C.); he nicknamed him 'The Brain' and said that where others needed the spur he needed the rein. After Plato's death Aristotle had a period abroad during which he followed the biological researches which fascinated him, and acted as tutor to the young prince who became Alexander the Great. Aristotle returned to Athens to form his own university. His father had been a doctor, and Aristotle had absorbed something of the scientist's approach. He himself lectured on a wide variety of topics: logic, biology, psychology, physics, metaphysics (we derive the word from him: *meta* means 'after', and these were the lectures he gave 'after' the course on physics, i.e. they were an advanced course in physics), ethics and politics, rhetoric, creative writing, among others: his surviving works are in fact lecture notes, either his own or some student's. But beyond that the Lyceum (the French for 'secondary school' is *lycée*) was a research-institution. Just as the doctors built up medical theory and practice by observing and recording case-histories, so Aristotle built up biology (in which he was supreme) by observing animals and recording his observations; he built up dramatic theory by observing or reading plays; and he built up political theory by setting his students to collect political constitutions and their histories. There is a difference from Plato. Both must have catered for students of independent means, but Plato's wanted to make their mark in politics, Aristotle's must have been absorbed by what they were engaged in. The curriculum available was a remarkable coverage of the sciences and the humanities.

- 2.1.3 In the centuries which followed, which we call the Hellenistic Age, roughly the three centuries from 300 B.C., but overlapping into the first centuries A.D. when Rome dominated the Mediterranean world, philosophy was chiefly concerned with ethics, with how to face an unstable world. The sermon tended to oust the lecture. The philosopher was more of a sage, a *guru*, than a professor or vice-chancellor. There was a formal division of education into logic, physics and ethics, but the first two were subordinate to the third. Physics did not imply experimental science at all, though it did involve the observation of nature. The Stoics studied nature to find the hand of God and evidence of divine design, in order to reassure their followers. The Epicureans studied nature to eliminate the hand of God and evidence of divine intervention, in order to free their followers from fear of God. Education, said one teacher, is an orchard. Logic is the fence, physics the trees, ethics the fruit.

It was however in this period that the structure of what was to be mediaeval education began to emerge. It is now that we first hear of the structure of education later identified as the *trivium* (literally "the place where three roads meet"), of grammar, rhetoric and dialectic, to which are added the *quadrivium* of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music: it should be remembered that mathematics played and plays an important rôle in astronomy and music. In the curious mnemonic from the Middle Ages:

Gram speaks, *Dia* teaches the truth, and *Rhet* beautifies words;
Mus sings, *Arith* counts, and *Ge* weighs, while *Ast* studies the stars.
More pertinently, there is a broad division between literary and

mathematical studies: this is the basis of our three Rs – Reading, 'Riting and 'Rithmetic – two being literary and one mathematical.

It will be noticed that historical studies played no part in ancient education: their sole function was to provide moral examples.



Fig. 3 Seal of the Faculty of Arts, University of Paris

2.2 The Mediaeval University

2.2.1 Many details of the origin of the mediaeval university remain obscure, but there was a great upsurge of higher education in western Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Before this time advanced scholarship was found in a few enlightened courts, like that of Charlemagne (742–814) or in cathedral schools like that at Rheims where Gerbert, who became pope as Sylvester II (c. 940–1003), taught. The basis was “the seven liberal arts” of the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, but there was ‘secret’ knowledge as well, perhaps of Islamic developments in mathematics or of alchemy. Education was in Latin.

2.2.2 The new colleges were at first known as *studia* or *studia generalia*, a term difficult to translate, but meaning something like “places of study open to all without restriction”. This meant that they in fact attracted foreigners. They were organised on the pattern of the guilds with their apprentices. The ‘Master of Arts’ corresponded to the master-craftsman in any other field. The universities (as they came to be called) offered at first a specialised professional training. Students came from all over Europe to Bologna for law, to Salerno for medicine, to Paris or Oxford for theology and philosophy. But with the great expansion a wide variety of disciplines became available at a single centre. Here, for example, is an advertisement put out by the University of Toulouse in 1228.

Here theologians teach pupils from the pulpits and the people at the cross-roads; the logicians instruct the champions of Aristotle in liberal arts; the grammarians refashion, as it were by analogy, the tongues of the stammering; the organists flatter the ears of the populace with the mellow sounds of their organs; the lawyers extort Justinian; the physicians preach Galen.

Whoever wants to scrutinise the bosom of nature can hear lectures of the volumes dealing with natural science, the books that



Fig. 4 Overseas students at the University of Prague being greeted by the Rector

were forbidden at Paris. Then, what else could be missing? Scholastic privileges? Not at all! You will enjoy an unbridled freedom. Or are you afraid of the malice of the people or the tyranny of a malevolent prince? Have no fear; the generous count of Toulouse has assured us of sufficient security and has guaranteed our salaries . . .

The basis of education remained the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*. But the authority of the Church demanded theological studies, and the authority of Aristotle permitted scientific studies (except, for a period, at Paris).

'Liberal arts' then is a phrase dating back to the Middle Ages. It really means "the skills appropriate to a free man"; and they are (to repeat): grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. It is a curious irony that these were conceived as practical skills by contrast with science which meant theoretical knowledge, theology being the queen of the *sciences*. Mathematics has never since been able quite to make up its mind whether it is an 'art', a 'science', both or neither.



Fig. 5 Rector and Doctor of the University of Paris

2.3 England: Oxford and Cambridge

Until the nineteenth century Oxford and Cambridge were the only universities in England, and the vast majority of those who were influential in church and state passed through one or the other. There was a concentration upon the classics, the civilisation of ancient Greece and Rome, and at Oxford *Litterae Humaniores*, literally 'more humane letters' or 'more cultured literature' – the same root, of course, as 'humanities' – meant and means the study of Greek and Latin literature and philosophy. Classical education, as it developed at Oxford and Cambridge in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century at its best meant a comprehensive view of a culture, its history, its institutions, its literature, its philosophy, its art, its way of life.

At Cambridge, partly through the association with one of the greatest of all scientists, Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727), the study of the exact sciences was fostered as well. The attitudes of some of the Greek philosophers dominated educational planning, and experimental science took longer to break in than mathematics, which was considered respectable, and Cambridge became a great centre of mathematics; for a long time one of the great achievements was the double-first, a first-class honours degree in both classics and mathematics.

The challenge to the dominance of classics came from two sides. On one side the sciences pressed for recognition. On the other there was an increasing demand for an education in the humanities which did not stop sixteen hundred years ago, for a history which was not



Fig 6 A caricature of life at Cambridge in the early nineteenth century, by Robert Cruickshank

merely ancient history, and a literature other than Greek and Latin. Resistance was strong. In 1910 there was opposition to the creation of a chair of English literature at Cambridge; it was stated that it would be "of a light and comic character – not only useless but positively harmful". In 1917 (admittedly during war) a member of the Senate pronounced that the teaching of foreign languages was "futile and to be deprecated in the highest degree".

Fig. 7 Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, by Loggan, 1688



All this has now been changed; unfortunately, a new parochialism was born. Classical students looked at Greek and Roman civilisation as a whole, but seldom related it to anything which came after. The disciplines which came in alongside the classics were too often studied in isolation from one another, so that a student might be expert in literature without knowing anything of the history and social background of the people who produced it, or expert in history but ignorant of poetry or music or art. And the gap between the sciences and the humanities has tended to become bigger, not least through the enormous developments and increasing specialisation within the sciences.

2.4 Scotland

The four great Scottish universities are many centuries older than any English universities except Oxford (c. 1160) and Cambridge (c. 1235). St. Andrews was founded in 1411, Glasgow in 1451, Aberdeen in 1494 and Edinburgh in 1583.

Scottish education was more closely linked with the life of the people. Oxford and Cambridge clearly did, and to some extent still do, offer an education for a ruling-class. The Scottish universities were more democratic and more popular: fees were low and bursaries available. A second major difference from Oxford and Cambridge is that the Scottish universities were much more open to ideas from the Continent, and in particular from Germany, than were the English.



Fig. 8 Edinburgh University

On the side of the humanities three things may be said. First, the tradition of the Greek and Latin classics has remained strong: the holder of the chair of Humanity is in fact the Professor of Latin. Second, the ordinary or pass degree does in theory offer an education of considerable breadth; it covers a wide range of subjects, including a foreign language, a science or mathematics, and a course in philosophy, all at a reputable and exacting level, and one or two in some depth. (The particular example is taken from Glasgow.) Unfortunately the large numbers taking these courses make it difficult to have effective personal contact between teachers and students, and though a lecture delivered to a large class can be an exciting experience for lecturer and students, it too often is not, and there is a proper demand for effective tutorials and seminars. The honours courses (also at Glasgow) have in theory retained a combination of breadth and depth, in that they consist of two subjects which are expected to illuminate one another. The object is in danger of being defeated when the subjects are English literature and English language, History and Constitutional History, Logic and Moral Philosophy.

It is fair to say that whereas this has been the pattern for many years, things are now changing.

2.5 The German Universities

The German universities date back to the later Middle Ages, but the period of their significant development lay in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was the German universities at Halle and Göttingen, and later Berlin, which revolutionised and transformed the idea and practice of university education: Here we can only touch on one or two aspects of the transformation:

- (a) Learning was free from dogma; scholars were free to explore.
- (b) German replaced Latin as the language of instruction: in this way the approach suddenly became contemporary.
- (c) The emphasis was on *science*. But this was not quite what we now mean by 'science', which was called 'natural science', i.e. the knowledge of nature; rather it was knowledge in any field.
- (d) Responsibility for being educated lay with the student. He could go to classes or not as he chose, change his university, and take his examination (which was all that mattered for qualification: no 'continuous assessment'!) when and where he chose.
- (e) Those who were responsible for the system were not concerned with what a student learned, provided that he learned something for himself. One of the leading German educationalists of last century wrote: "But this is important: that the student gain a clear conception of the problems of science" (i.e. scholarship) "and of the processes by which she solves them; *this* is necessary: that he himself conduct these processes at some points, or at least at some one point: that he follow out some problems to their remotest results – to a point where he may say to himself that there is now nobody in the whole world who can instruct him further on this matter, that here he stands firmly and surely on his own feet and decides according to his own judgment."
- (f) It follows that the German universities fostered research, and it is in fact from them that research has come to play so large a part in the higher degree structure of universities throughout the world.
- (g) We must beware of overstating the change. But clearly there is a change, from *content* to *method*. So that the German universities

were responsible for a sharpening of university education; intellectual discipline became more intense. But at the same time there was a weakening of the idea of 'the humanities', in which the content is in some sense the most important thing and the method only a means to the more precise and profound understanding of man.

2.6 Redbrick

The name 'Redbrick' was given by Professor Allison Peers (writing during the 1939-45 war under the pseudonym of Bruce Truscot), to the English universities outside Oxford and Cambridge (which he nicknamed 'Oxbridge').

The oldest of these is Durham (1832), followed by London (1836: some of the constituent colleges were founded earlier). The civic universities, as they have been called, date mostly from the second half of the last century, though in most instances they did not become independent universities till this century. Examples are Birmingham (1880: university 1900), Bristol (1876: university 1909), Exeter (1865: university 1955), Hull (1927: university 1954), Leeds (1874: university 1904), Liverpool (1881: university 1903), Manchester (1851: university 1903), Nottingham (1881: university 1948), Reading (1892: university 1926), Sheffield (1897: university 1905), Southampton (1862: university 1952). Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester were part of a single university from the 1880s and separated in the 1900s. The University of Wales, with constituent colleges in Cardiff, Swansea, Aberyswyth, Bangor and Lampeter has a generally similar system to the English redbrick universities.



Fig. 9 The original building, Owens College, Manchester

Manchester may be taken as an example. As early as 1829 there was discussion of a university at Manchester. The idea was pressed in the next fifteen years by the local School of Medicine and by the Dissenting Academy: it must be remembered that only those who

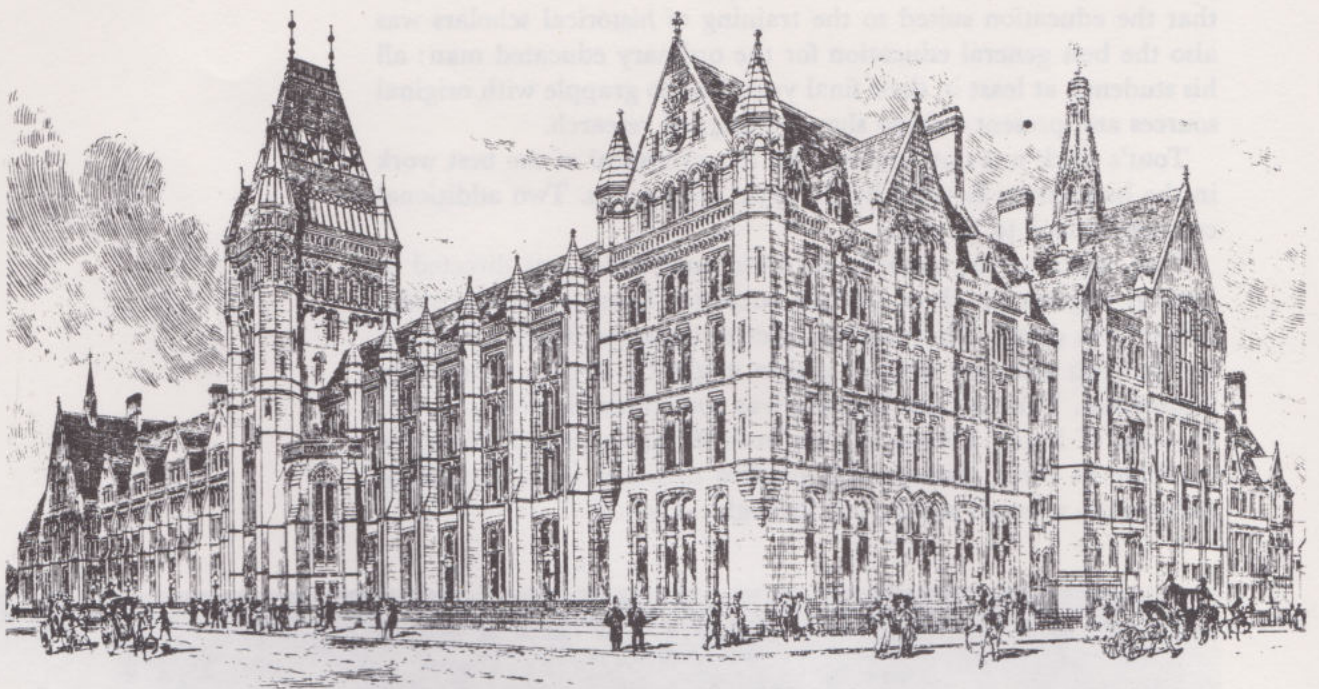


Fig. 10 The Victoria University of Manchester

professed the Anglican faith were admitted to Oxford and Cambridge. Then in 1845 a prosperous cotton merchant, John Owens, who had made a fortune in trade with China and America, and who had remained unmarried, bequeathed just under £100,000 to establish a College. Six years later Owens College was opened in the house once occupied by Richard Cobden, a radical opponent of the Corn Laws. The College prospered, and in the 1870s H. E. Roscoe, Professor of Chemistry, worked hard to build Owens College into an institution of such calibre that it could not be refused a charter. By 1880 he had succeeded. The Victoria University received its charter; Owens College was its first constituent college, later joined by colleges from Liverpool and Leeds which subsequently became universities in their own right.

It will be clear that these universities were founded in, and originally intended to serve, the main centres of population. Like the Scottish universities, they were closely linked with the local authorities; hence less liable to be carried away by airy-fairy arguments, more down-to-earth, more practical. Courses were developed, for example, in Photographic Technology and in Industrial Administration at Manchester, in Brewing at Birmingham, in Dyeing, in Textile Chemistry and in Gas engineering at Leeds, in Glass Technology at Sheffield, in Automobile Engineering at Bristol. These were challenged, often bitterly, by traditional educationalists in the 1930s. Today we tend to see them as an important breakthrough in technological education.

The civic universities played a similar rôle in developing modern disciplines in the humanities, precisely because they were so down-to-earth. At Manchester T. F. Tout (1855–1929) developed a school of historical studies second to none in the world. (See A. Marwick *The Nature of History*, pp. 48–9.) The bases of this were three. First, there was his own genius as a teacher: he met his students as equals and communicated his own faith in scholarship, his own enthusiasm

and his own methods through his own combination of warmth and clarity. Secondly, he believed in the combination of a broad treatment of the whole sweep of European history with a limited but profound specialisation from an early age. Thirdly, he was convinced that the education suited to the training of historical scholars was also the best general education for the ordinary educated man: all his students, at least in their final year, had to grapple with original sources and present a thesis showing original research.

Tout's work was outstanding, but it was typical of the best work in the humanities fostered by the civic universities. Two additional comments need to be made.

First, much of the work in the civic universities was directed to general degrees, in three or four subjects. These offered breadth rather than depth. They were subject to the same disadvantages as the Scottish ordinary degree: classes might be large and teaching impersonal. Further, the breadth was sometimes illusory. A combination of Latin, History of Art, and Mathematics is liable to be a nibble at three disconnected patches of the field of knowledge rather than a broad swathe cut through the whole.

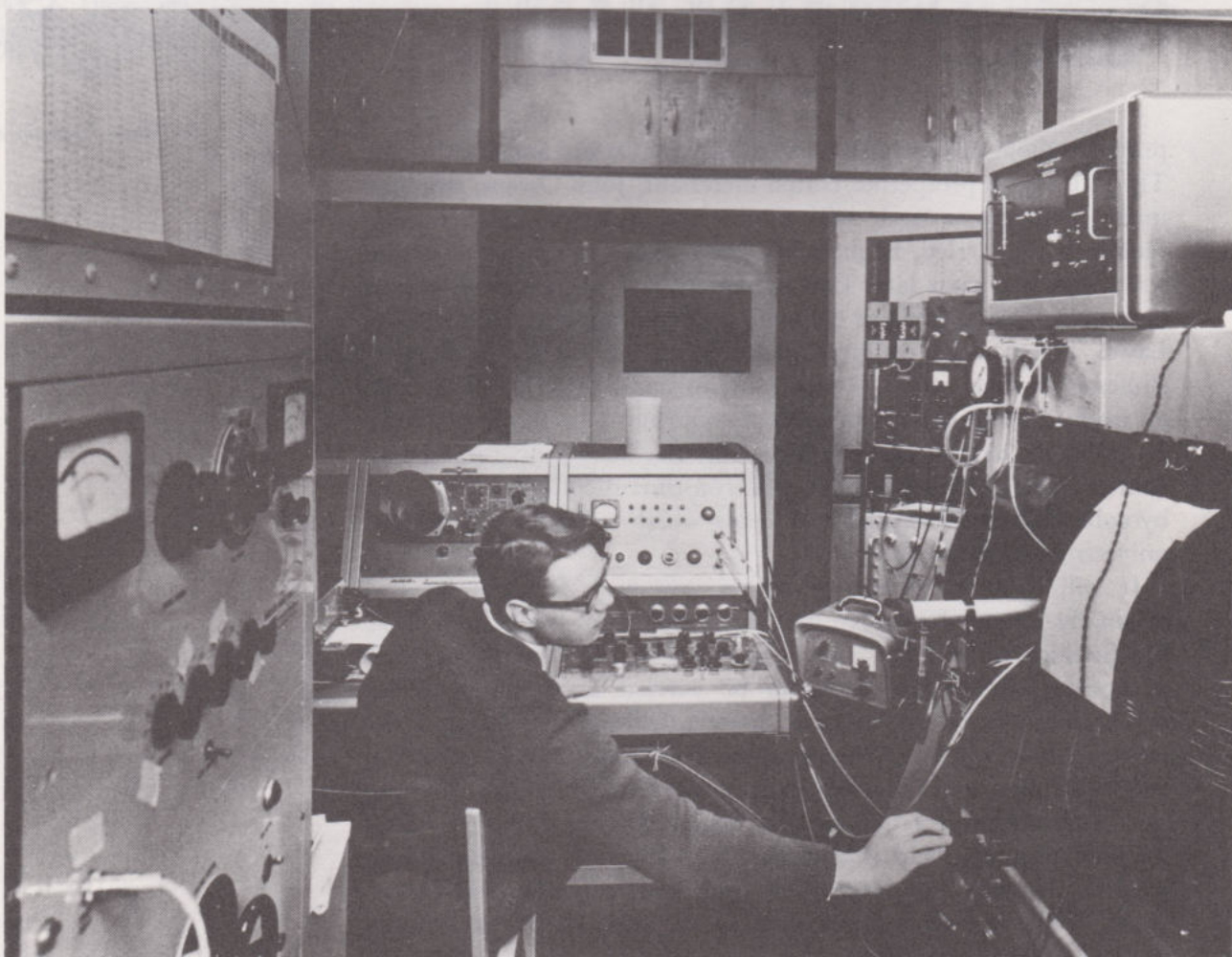


Fig. 11 Work in a modern scientific laboratory, Queen Mary College, University of London

Second, Oxbridge tended to look down on Redbrick. Redbrick's answer was to foster new disciplines for study, to show by intensive work the power of those disciplines. This meant specialisation and (as we have seen) the isolation of one aspect of the study of man from others. The specialisation was increased by the advance of science, and by the readiness of the new universities to embrace the

sciences. The old (and impossible) ideal of a vague omniscience was replaced by the ideal of limited but deep knowledge. As T. H. Huxley put it in his rectorial address at Aberdeen, "a theory of knowledge limited to a comparatively small range is preferable to a slighter acquaintanceship spread over a more extended area".

2.7 The American Universities

The three great older American universities, Harvard, William and Mary, and Yale, were founded under British colonial administration and were a reflection of the Oxford and Cambridge of their own day. The American university scene is however exceedingly complex. Two characteristic features are the multiplying of relatively small private colleges of very varying standards, and the development of 'land grant institutions', financed by the individual states, and concentrating in the first place on agriculture and engineering, home economics and business administration. These last provide a parallel to the civic universities of Britain. The land grant universities were local, practical and (within limits) democratic. They have, like the civic universities, greatly widened their curricula, but they have



Fig. 12 University of California, Berkeley, U.S.A.

retained their civic and local links: indeed local political control is sometimes excessive.

We may make some general observations about the American university scene.

A much higher proportion of the population attends universities than in Britain. This is somewhat offset by the fact that standards

of entry are far lower, and that there is a high 'drop-out' rate in the first year. It remains true that for the last century university education has not been for the privileged few. It follows also that numbers at individual universities tend to be very large.

Evaluation is not by a final examination, but by the steady accumulation, term by term, of grades assigned for individual courses. This has advantages and disadvantages: the once-for-all examination can be a severe strain; but so can the sense that everything you do affects your final 'grade-point average'.

The education of the undergraduate tends to be broad and general. Specialised work is done in the post-graduate period; American post-graduate training is outstanding.

A typical degree course in Liberal Arts is as follows. A total of 180 'credits' is required (roughly, the successful completion of a course with 1 lecture or tutorial a week over a term ranks as 1 credit, 2 lectures a week 2 credits, and so on). A student cannot normally take more than 15 credits in a term, so that he will take 4 years to graduate. He must include in his course 12 credits on Freshman English (i.e. a course in English for first-year students), 25 in a foreign language, at least 9 in each of Communication, Physical and Biological Sciences, Man and Society, and Artistic Expression, and at least 75 credits at an advanced level, of which 45 or more may be in a single subject, but at least 30 must be in courses outside the major subject.

Plainly, if we take a 3-credit course as typical, this gives a student 60 courses, and offers him a wide choice. He has to do some English, some languages, some science, some social science, and some creative work, and he has to do some 10 advanced courses outside his main subject. He does not suffer from the narrow specialisation which afflicts some British students. A really good student can put together an exciting curriculum which integrates his own individual interests. On the other hand the whole field of knowledge is broken up into rather small, disconnected fragments, and if a student doesn't make a whole for himself there is often no whole at all – a bit of English here, and French there, and biology somewhere else, and "What on earth can I do to make up three credits this term?"

2.8 The Post-War Universities

- 2.8.1 The first of the new universities to be started in Britain was the University of North Staffordshire at Keele: behind the 'experiment' (as it was almost 'always called) was A. D. Lindsay, Master of Balliol College, Oxford, and a noted humanist. Lindsay was deeply influenced by his Oxford experiences, sometimes seeing things he valued and wanted to keep, sometimes reacting against what he knew. He believed that a university was a place for teaching. He rejected the idea that a university existed to produce experts. He had no respect for subjects of academic study merely because they were taught in other universities: he saw their appearance there as a matter of historical accident. And he believed that what the world needed was not primarily specialists, but "men and women with an informed sense of moral and political responsibility".

For this end Lindsay and his associates, dissatisfied with the narrowness of much sixth-form education, designed a four-year degree course, of which the first was given over to 'foundation studies', and was shared by all students. The object of this first year was "to give an understanding of the heritage of Western civilisation,

of modern society, and of the nature, methods, and influence of the experimental sciences". Each of these three topics occupied a full term, containing a hundred lectures and a weekly discussion session. In addition a student was expected to attend three tutorials a week, one on a specific subject in humanities, one similarly in the social sciences, one in the sciences. In the area in which he had already specialised he would change his subject each term: thus a linguist might do a term on each of English, French and German, and a full year on economics and biology.

After the foundation year came a three-year degree course consisting of two principal subjects, each studied for three years, and two subsidiary subjects, each studied for one year. Of these four, at least one must be from the group of subjects offered by humanities and the social studies and one from the sciences. Lindsay here had two aims in view. In the first place, he felt acutely the division which C. P. Snow was later to identify as "The Two Cultures" – broadly, science and the humanities – and wanted to do something to bridge it. Secondly, he believed that the subjects commonly studied in universities suffered by being studied in isolation. This was not a question for him of "breadth versus depth". Rather, narrowness meant shallowness: greater breadth meant greater depth. In the words of A. N. Whitehead, twentieth-century philosopher and educationalist, "A man who knows only his own science, as a routine peculiar to that science, does not even know that. He has no fertility of thought, no power of quickly seeing the bearing of alien ideas. He will discover nothing, and be stupid in practical application." A student of, say, French literature, was not really competent to criticise it unless he had studied another literature with which to compare it. Or, again, Lindsay was keen on the combination of literature and philosophy. He did not believe it possible to understand Coleridge and Wordsworth without a knowledge of philosophy, and he saw the richness of studying side by side Shakespeare and Bacon, or Milton and Hobbes.

Lindsay was a pioneer and has set much of the pattern of later developments.

2.8.2 The University of Sussex

In the late 1950s it was decided to open seven new universities in Britain. Sussex was the first of these, and from the first attracted the most attention. We are not here concerned with such matters as the site, or the fact that Sir Basil Spence was secured as architect. The Academic Planning Committee under the chairmanship of Sir James Duff made a bold move in transferring the basis of the degree structure from *departments* to *schools*. It was increasingly felt that the familiar single-subject honours degree was unsatisfactory even for the training of scholars, and still more unsatisfactory for those who were going to move into a wide variety of general occupations. The Schools listed in 1969 were African and Asian Studies, Applied Sciences, Biological Sciences, Cultural and Community Studies, English and American Studies, European Studies, Mathematical and Physical Sciences, Molecular Sciences, and Social Sciences. The subjects normally associated with humanities are to be found in a geographical context in African and Asian Studies, English and American Studies, and European Studies, and in a more general context in Cultural and Community Studies, and to some extent in Social Sciences. There is a broad division between Arts Schools and

Science Schools. The problem of C. P. Snow's 'two cultures' has not been solved, though there has been concern and experiment.

In arts subjects the general pattern has been to divide the field into literary, historical and philosophical subjects (the last a broad term, embracing sociology, politics and economics as well as philosophy). A student picks one of these as his core subject or major subject, which occupies five of the nine examination papers: the others are divided between subjects in the other two areas, thus providing a context for the core.

On this we may make several comments:

(a) It is important to see that the Schools are not glorified departments. This is ensured by the considerable overlap between them. Thus History can be studied in any of the five Arts Schools as a core subject.

(b) Plainly the scheme has considerable merit. First, it is flexible. Second, it ensures that traditional subjects are viewed in context. Third, it makes a serious attempt to be relevant; in the words of the prospectus, students "are expected to concern themselves with contemporary as well as inherited culture, with history in the making as well as history that is already made". Fourth, it is a deliberate endeavour to see the field of humanities as a whole.

(c) Two major disadvantages have been identified. First, depth may be sacrificed to breadth: "context eats up core", as one student said. Second, the unity, the integration, may be theoretical rather than practical. "How the ruddy hell", asked a student of economic geography, "does logical positivism or historiography tie up with economic geography or help to put it in context?"

Sussex does not offer a panacea, but it is certainly the most important of recent experiments in a more comprehensive view of humane education.

2.8.3 The Open University

We may fittingly close this survey with a brief account of some of the thinking which lies behind the curricula of the Open University.

The Planning Committee, whose chairman, Sir Peter Venables, became the University's Pro-Chancellor (in effect the Chairman of the Council: the Chancellor being a primarily honorific appointment and the Vice-Chancellor the academic head) shared the feeling that the traditional degree courses were too inflexible, and they tried to restore some of the unity of the field of knowledge. They wanted to start from an 'integrated' foundation, and only later to move to a more concentrated specialisation.

But some division was inevitable. They started from four 'lines': they avoided the traditional name of 'faculty' or the Sussex 'school', though faculty has since been accepted. These four lines were Mathematics (which was intended to embrace Technology), Science, Arts and Social Science. (Faculties of Technology and of Educational Studies were added in the first year.) In order to minimise the effect of this division, they planned for students to take foundation courses in two of the four faculties. This is slightly more flexible than what Sussex offers, though the result is in fact much the same, with a tendency to concentrate either on the scientific and mathematical side, or on the humanities and social sciences.

The degree structure is a compromise between the British system, where there is usually a single, once-for-all examination on the whole of the work done while at university (sometimes with 'hurdles'

to pass at the end of each previous year), and the American system, where a multiplicity of short fragmented courses each carries its own credit rating. A course lasts for a year, and is in content and quality roughly equivalent to half-a-year's normal university work. Graduation is on six credits. This is an attempt to use the flexibility of the American system without its extreme fragmentation.

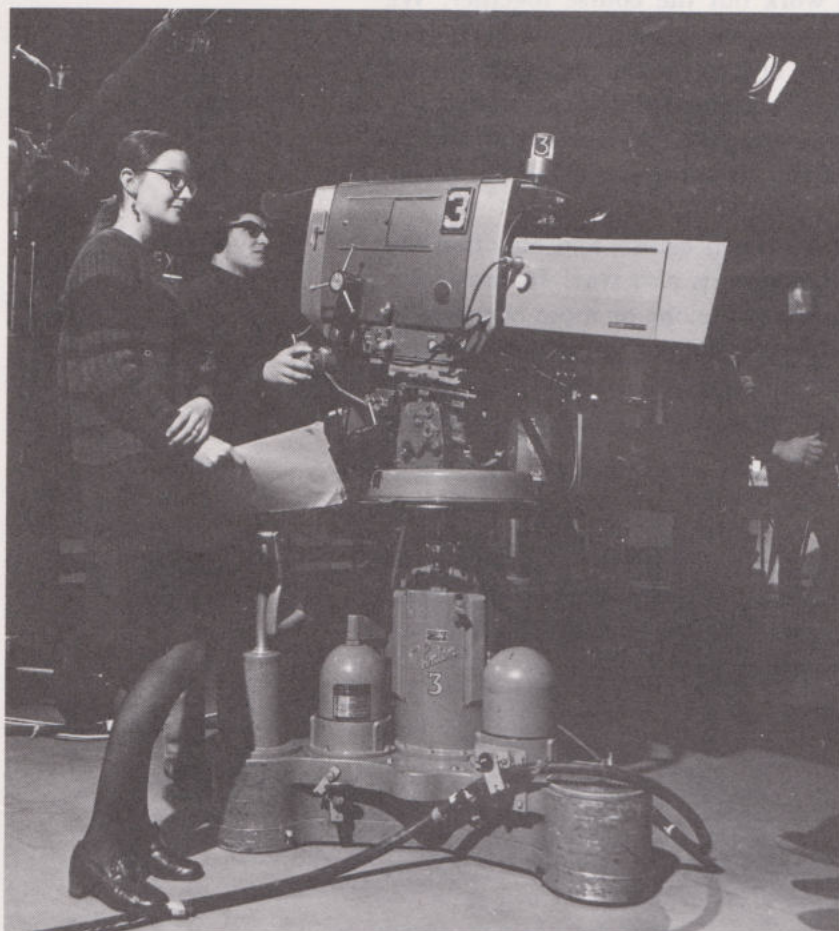


Fig. 13 Catherine King of the Open University at work in the television studio

The Foundation Course in the Faculty of Arts is an attempt to present an integrated introduction to the humanities. At the second level the integrated approach continues, and is applied to period-studies, the initial courses offered being *Renaissance and Reformation* and *The Age of Revolutions*. It is possible to graduate without going beyond second level. After the second level something more like the traditional specialisms will be available, but even here it is likely that in some of the courses at least the approach will show a higher awareness of other aspects of the humanities than usual.

There are no departments. But all the academic staff have inevitably their own specialised training. The Arts Faculty includes historians, scholars in English literature, philosophers, art historians and musicologists. There is a classicist with a degree in theology, a historian who has turned to art history, a chemist who is also a historian of science, a theologian with interests in philosophy and history. One of the first staff tutors was another historian who had turned to art history, another a musicologist who had turned to philosophy.

It is hard at the outset to identify the likely difficulties in approaching an integrated course in humanities in this way. Perhaps two.

First, sometimes in preparing courses we have been able to do little more than string together a series of contributions by specialists,

each independent of the next. This is not in any real sense integration. There are in fact three approaches:

(a) Genuine integration, which can only be in the mind of each individual. If we have not achieved it, we hope that none the less you may.

(b) An interdisciplinary approach, in which representatives of different traditional disciplines work out the course together. We have done a great deal of this in planning, and it has been very exciting to do. We have done some of it in the detailed working-out of this course, but it has proved exacting and time-consuming.

(c) The individual disciplines operating independently but side by side. You will find something of this too in the working out of the course.

Second, some students are by nature specialists and may find the integrated approach hard: the converse is also true. In particular some students may have a blind spot over one or more elements of the course. We recognise this, and you should not be unduly distressed if you find some sections more difficult *for you* than others. Soldier on! This is an exciting experiment, and we shall learn from the problems as well as from the achievements.

2.8.4 Exercise

The following quotations refer either descriptively or critically to one or other of the sorts of university which we have discussed. Put in the box the letter appropriate to the sort of university to which you think the writer is referring:

- A The ancient Greek universities.
- B The mediaeval universities.
- C Oxford and Cambridge.
- D The Scottish universities.
- E The German universities.
- F The 'Redbrick' universities.
- G The American universities.
- H The Post-war universities.

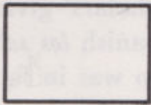
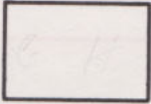
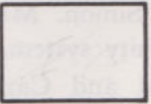
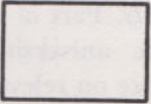
1 Truth is set in our midst: it is open to any who is able, to climb to her, to any who dares, to possess her; and we will cheer.

2 A college is an association of masters and scholars established in some place with the intention of studying the sciences.

3 The student relies too much on the traditional system of learning by listening. He cannot afford to buy many books of his own, and it is not part of the tradition that he should. As for libraries, these cannot give each member of a class of two hundred the books he needs at about the same time as his colleagues. So lectures continue to be used as a substitute for books.

4 The universities are key-points not only in the educational system but also in our social structure . . . the culture of the modern era which should pervade the universities is a scientific culture . . . it is in every way different from, even the opposite of, the old

'classical' culture which has for so long dominated our educational thinking. This culture takes little or no account of the vital factors which condition the development of society at the present day . . . the education system in this country is essentially a class system . . . it is in accordance with the morality of a capitalist society that this success (i.e. "attaining a certain position in society") can be bought with money without reference to comparative merit and ability . . . the crisis and bankruptcy of modern thought, reflected in university teaching, becomes apparent . . . in the university, knowledge and culture has as its admitted object mainly the development of the personality of the individual student.

- 5 Work in the arts developed slowly in these Colleges, often as a subsidiary to work in the sciences. It was maintained almost entirely to meet the needs of intending school-teachers. 
- 6 It is a bad habit to judge new universities by their innovations . . . Nevertheless, it may be useful to list some of the special features. . . . We have a Department of Higher Education . . . We have the first Chair of Operational Research in the country. We have given an unusual slant to studies in Mathematics. The Department of Politics will (for the first time in this country) be engaged in systematic research on the general theory relating to international conflict. The Department of Economics will have an exceptional interest in industrial problems. We have made our first appointment in Russian: we have a quite new kind of course called Environmental Studies. 
- 7 Those disciplines with a ready market in industry and government are favoured and fostered: the natural sciences, engineering, mathematics and the social sciences when these serve the brain-trusting propaganda purposes of 'liberal' government. The humanities naturally suffer, so that what should be the substance of undergraduate education suffers. The emphasis is given to research instead of to teaching undergraduates. 
- 8 Not everyone takes the same view about what students should learn if they are to achieve excellence or the best life possible; it is not clear whether it ought to be directed primarily to the intellect or to the moral character. 

2.8.5 Answers and comments

1 E. Gundling at Halle in 1711. One would hope that this might be said in any university at any time, but the quotation is typical of the breakthrough made in Germany in the eighteenth century. See 2.5 (a).

2 B. From the laws of King Alfonso X establishing a system of university education in Castile in 1263. The phrase 'masters and scholars' gives it away. 'The sciences' is a translation of the Spanish *los saberes*, and means "the areas of knowledge". Alfonso was in fact establishing two areas of study: law and 'the arts'.

3 D. From an article by D. D. Raphael, then Senior Lecturer in Moral Philosophy at Glasgow, written in 1956. Democratic education and large classes.

4 C. From a remarkable book written in 1943 by a student named Brian Simon. Mr. Simon was in fact attacking the whole university system, but his strictures were more relevant to Oxford and Cambridge. He later became a Professor of Education.

5 F. From Professor Jack Simmons' book on Leicester entitled *New University*. Part of an introductory survey of the development of civic universities, and characteristics of their original insistence on relevance to the local situation.

6 H. From an article by the Vice-Chancellor of Lancaster, C. F. Carter in *The Lancaster Guardian* in 1964. Typical of the experimental approach of the new universities, it is interesting that Lancaster seems to be looking for neglected fields rather than redirecting the basic educational approach.

- 7 G. From Mario Savio, leader of student revolt in Berkeley in 1964. Savio's position is strongly stated, and some might think overstated: he draws attention to two dangers in the American system, in the political control, and in the emphasis on post-graduate studies.

- 8 A. From Aristotle. He discusses the conflicting claims of utility, moral education and research. He allows some place for the utilitarian aspects of education but thinks that in general education should enable men to live healthily in society.

2.9 Exercise

If you were responsible for working out a course in the humanities, jot down some of the subjects which you would feel it right to include:

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4

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12

Comment

Our only comments are these:

- 1 Look back at your list and see if you can put them together into a coherent whole.
- 2 We hope that the course which you will do, and subsequent courses which you may take in the Faculty of Arts, will include the things which *you* think a course in humanities ought to include: we hope too that we may lay before you some aspects of the study of man which may not have occurred to you.

J. F.

3.0 **FOUR KEY WORDS:** **'ARTS', 'HUMANITIES', 'CULTURE', 'CIVILISATION'**

(In these sections you will find specific references to V. Gordon Childe, *What Happened in History*, page 31, and A. Marwick, *The Nature of History*, pages 83–87. Depending on your style of work you may wish to read these references before embarking on this correspondence material, or you may prefer to look them up as you work your way through the material, or you may prefer to leave them all till the end of the material.)

3.1 **Arts and Humanities**

All of the four 'key words', *arts*, *humanities*, *culture*, *civilisation*, are of central importance in this Foundation Course. Yet we tend to use them in a bewildering variety of ways. It is extremely important that you should be clear about the various meanings which attach to these words.

One way of trying to pin down the exact meaning of a word is to trace it back to its 'roots' – in the case of these words, to the original Latin. Tracing back the roots of a word in this way can be extremely helpful; on the other hand we have to accept that frequently in modern usage words have developed meanings quite far from the original Latin connotation. As far as the word *arts* is concerned the basic root meaning, which it is always worth while keeping firmly in mind, is *skill*.

Your first encounter with the word *arts* arises from the fact that this Foundation Course is a foundation course in the Faculty of Arts. The idea behind this use of *arts* is very close to the root one: it is that the subjects studied in a university Faculty of Arts are those necessary to provide the basic *skills*, either for living life itself to the full, or as preparation for more advanced academic study. This was the meaning which attached to the *arts* in the mediaeval universities, where the student studied the *trivium*, which consisted of grammar, logic and rhetoric, and the *quadrivium*, which consisted of arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy. You will note that although there is no arithmetic, geometry or astronomy in the Arts Faculty at this university, we still feel it important that you should undergo a basic course in logic; and although we do not teach grammar and rhetoric, we do teach literature.

This meaning of *arts* as basic *skill* (the word, of course, also being used in the singular, as when we say, "he had mastered the *art* of speaking in public") lasted until the eighteenth century. During that century there grew up the more restricted usage whereby *art* or *arts* was applied to the skill of painting or sculpting, and to the products of that skill (paintings, sculptures, etc., that is, the *visual arts*). It was in the early nineteenth century that the romantic emphasis on the notion of individual genius gave rise to the idea of *art* or *arts* meaning work, not of mere skill, but of high imaginative quality. The usage covered music and literature as well as the visual arts. Sometimes, to avoid ambiguity, people used the phrase *fine arts* when they specifically meant the visual arts of drawing, painting and sculpture. However this does not end the complications of the usage of this word, since universities also began to talk of *Fine Art* (singular) to mean, effectively, the *study* of the fine arts, including art history as well as studio work.

You can see, therefore, that there is considerable ambiguity in the use of the word *arts*; particularly unfortunate from the point of view of university use is the nineteenth century insistence on genius and

creative imagination, which implied a divorce between 'the arts' and everyday life. Thus, although we have followed accepted practice in other British universities by having a Faculty of Arts in the Open University, we have decided to call our Foundation Course a foundation course in *Humanities*. Again this is not a simple word, but it is perhaps slightly less complicated than the word *arts*. Obviously the root meaning here concerns the study of, or the attributes of, human beings. In the mediaeval universities *humanities* in fact was often used as simply another word for *arts*. More precisely it meant "learning or literature concerned with human culture (to introduce another 'key word' which we have still to define)", and this, in practice, meant the study of grammar, rhetoric, poetry and, above all, the classics. In the Scottish universities to this day *Humanity* (in the singular) still means the study of Latin language and literature.

In modern usage (and therefore in the usage of this Foundation Course) *humanities* implies studies directed towards the understanding of man, with a particular emphasis on his intellectual and creative achievements. We must take note that at this university there is also, in the Faculty of Social Sciences, a Foundation Course in Understanding Society. Some academics in fact would wish to include such subjects as anthropology and economics in the humanities; they might also wish to include such subjects as genetics and mathematics. When it comes to the question of understanding man, obviously it is impossible to draw rigid lines. But there are at least common-sense reasons for making a distinction between man in his intellectual and creative aspects, and man in his more basic social relationships. In this Humanities Foundation Course we will necessarily make constant references to topics which for convenience are ranked with the social sciences; but the main thrust of the course will be towards the general aims stated in the Students' Handbook.

It is perhaps important to stress at this stage two points about the modern study of the humanities. These are that teachers of the humanities now place much more stress on the unconscious and irrational aspects of human behaviour than the more positivist and logically-minded teachers of the arts did in the past. The second point is that we must today see the humanities in the context of the whole world, not just from the point of view of our own country, or of Western civilisation (to introduce yet another of our 'key words'). With the emergence of what is sometimes called the 'third world' (the Afro-Asian and Latin American nations) we are more than ever aware of the existence of many important civilisations different from our own. It will be the function of the next unit in this course to draw your attention to the immense variety of human civilisations, past and present. Until you have grasped something of this variety you have not really entered upon true study of the humanities.

For all that, it is not unreasonable that we should begin our exploration of understanding man by looking at our own civilisation and at those achievements of man which are more easily accessible to us. It is for this reason that the main content of this course will be confined to the realm of Western civilisation; but this is a beginning only – never forget the immense variety and richness of human experience.

Exercise

This section has been largely concerned with various definitions of two rather similar words, *arts* and *humanities*. Let us now list the meanings we have encountered.

- A *Art* or *arts* meaning 'skill' or 'skills'.
- B *Art* or *arts* meaning "imaginative works of individual genius".
- C Both *arts* and *humanities* meaning "basic learning concerning the understanding of man and his literature, philosophy, language, and other creative achievements, designed as a preparation for a full life, or for more advanced academic study".
- D *Humanity* meaning "Latin language and literature".
- E *Art* and *fine arts* meaning "painting, sculpture etc. (the visual arts)".
- F *Fine art* meaning "the academic study of the fine arts, including art history".

Listed below are six sentences, each of which use one or other of our tricky words twice over. There are two boxes at the end of each sentence: using the appropriate letter from the list given above indicate the two meanings implied in the usage of these words.

- 1 The art class for housewives was provided by a first-year student of Fine Art.
- 2 He was professor of Humanity in the Faculty of Arts.
- 3 The mediaeval squire had first to learn the art of war; for him war became a fine art.
- 4 On his way to the Institute of Fine Arts the professor bought a copy of the new authorised version of the bible: "a real work of art," he muttered.
- 5 Study of the Fine Arts was included with the Humanities though sociology was not.
- 6 He gave up art and took a degree in arts instead.

Answers

1	E	F	4	E	B
2	D	C	5	E	C
3	A	A	6	E	C

Discussion

There should be no difficulty or ambiguity at all about these sentences. Sentence 3, perhaps, is slightly tricky but it should be clear to you that 'fine art' is ordinary everyday usage, not Fine Art meaning the academic study of art and art history. In question 4 'work of art' obviously means, not one of the visual arts, but an imaginative work of genius. In sentence 5, Fine Arts means the visual arts, though the sentence would have made equally good (though different) sense if the phrase had been Fine Art in the singular, meaning the history of art. Sentence 6 may seem tricky but is quite obvious when you think about it. If you have not got all of these questions correct you must go back and read the correspondence material again.

3.2 Culture: Civilisation

The root meaning concealed in the word *culture* involves the idea of *tilling* or *cultivating*, as when we talk of a farmer tilling or cultivating his plot of land. The modern meanings of the term come into use only in the early nineteenth century; but buried within them these meanings always have this notion of tilling or cultivating, or *improving* or *developing* or *refining*.

The first new meaning which developed in the early nineteenth century implied the most cultivated or refined aspects of an individual or society – his (or its) tastes, manners and artistic and intellectual development. We still use the word *culture* in this somewhat loose way, often simply to mean "Books, theatre, music and so on". This use of *culture* often carries snobbish overtones, and sometimes rouses people to quite strong feelings. In this sense the word is used without any definite or indefinite article – 'culture' not 'the culture' or 'a culture'.

But as the new social sciences of anthropology, sociology, and also archaeology, developed in the middle and later nineteenth century, other, more precise, meanings were given to the term *culture*. First of all *culture*, this time almost always with a definite or indefinite article (or else with an *adjective* identifying the particular culture), was used to describe one definable complex of human behaviour, involving thought, speech, action as well as utilitarian and artistic products, which can be distinguished from other *cultures*, other definable complexes of human behaviour. It is in this sense that archaeologists, for example, talk of a particular culture as for example 'Iron Age culture', that is *the* culture characteristic of the Iron Age, and distinct

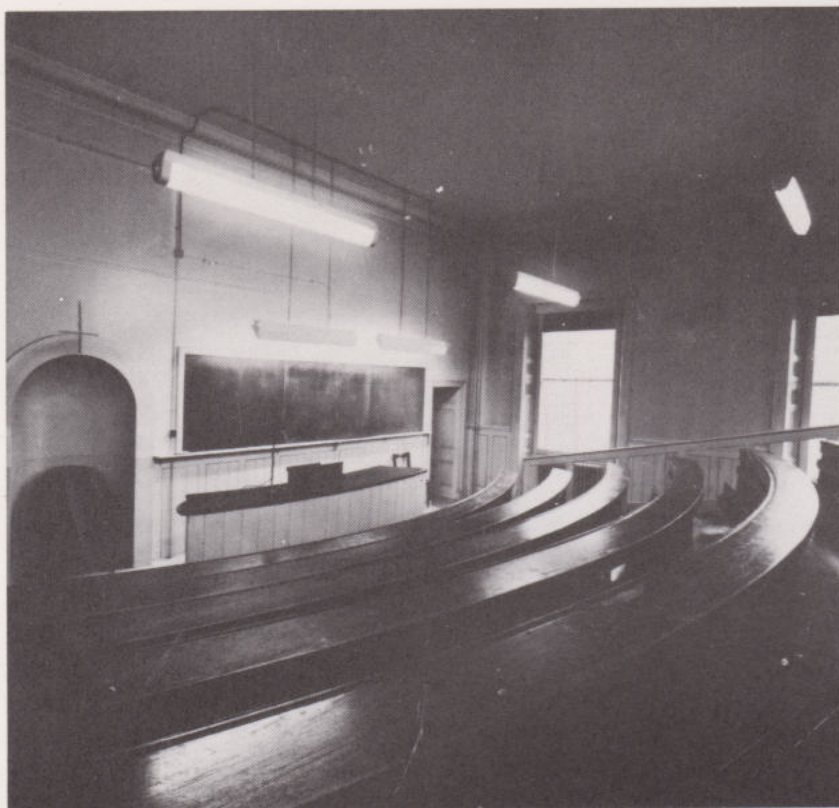


Fig. 14 The Humanity Lecture Room at Edinburgh University, today

from that of other ages. And when a sociologist talks of the culture of Western Europe he is thinking of the entire complex of human behaviour – not just of the artistic and intellectual developments.

This meaning of culture has also been developed in a more limited usage, implying the pattern of typical behaviour of a relatively small sub-group. Thus one talks, not only of “the culture of Western Europe”, but of “the culture of today’s youth” – perhaps even of ‘pop culture’. One can talk of the culture of a particular town (though one might in fact mean no more than the theatres and art galleries, a debased form of the first meaning), or of a particular street in a particular town.

Exercise

Summarising what has just been said about culture we are left with three definitions:

- A Tastes, manners, artistic and intellectual development (and, in the most simplified form, “theatres, music, etc.”).
- B A particular, identifiable complex of human behaviour and its artistic and intellectual products which can be distinguished from other *cultures*.
- C The pattern of typical behaviour relating to a sub-group.

Listed below are a number of sentences using the word *culture*. By entering the appropriate letter in the box at the end of the sentence indicate which of the three meanings is intended (enter *two* letters if you feel there is genuine ambiguity).

- 1 “Whenever I hear the word culture I reach for my gun.” (famous remark of the Nazi leader Goering).

Fig. 15 (opposite) A symbol of ‘pop-culture’

- 2 A characteristic of tribal culture is the important part played by myth.
- 3 Books are giving way to television sets in our culture.
- 4 The triumphant supremacy of Britain in the nineteenth century made the English nobleman the pattern of international aristocratic culture.
- 5 The Industrial Revolution had a devastating effect on British culture.
- 6 It may not be surprising if coloured immigrants have difficulty in adjusting to British ways since they come from a different culture.
- 7 He showed his love of culture by frequent visits to the theatre.
- 8 In the eighteenth century French culture completely eclipsed that of Britain.
- 9 He paid special attention to the rise of the Metal Age cultures.
- 10 The modern affluent teenager has developed a culture of his own.

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Specimen Answers

1

A

6

B

2

B

7

A

3

C or B

8

A

4

A or C

9

B

5

A or B

10

C



Fig. 16 Another sub-culture

Discussion

These definitions should all be completely straightforward. If you have not got the answers right read again through the paragraphs discussing the various meanings of the word *culture*. Sentences 3, 4 and 5 are ambiguous, though I think the *first* meaning given in the specimen answers is the one intended. You can see the dangers of the word; though, in practised hands, it can be valuable to have a word which simultaneously conveys two slightly different shades of meaning. If you yourself wish to use the word *culture* it is probably best used in the second meaning given here, though perhaps you should always think of it having slight overtones of the first meaning. It does not seem to be sensible to use the word when some other phrase such as “art, literature, and music” could be used with less ambiguous effect. When you are reading be careful to make up your own mind just which usage is intended by the author.

Rather similar confusions attend the use of the word *civilisation*. Here the root notion is that of belonging to an organised state. Thus we get the first, everyday, usage, again almost invariably without an article, definite or indefinite, implying “the *quality* of being out of a state of barbarism, of being enlightened, of enjoying refinements in everyday comforts as well as in thought and artistic expression”. This is the way in which Sir George Clark tends to use the word both in his *Early Modern Europe* and in the book recommended for background reading, *The Seventeenth Century*. This is also the usage of Sir Kenneth Clark in his famous television series *Civilization*. What Sir Kenneth Clark was concerned with was the physical, visible manifestations of this *quality* called *civilisation*: great architecture, great painting, great works of literature and music; and also some of the, perhaps dubious, conveniences of modern life.



Fig. 17 The sub-culture of a nineteenth-century London street: Dudley Street, Seven Dials, by Gustav Doré

A related but more particular meaning introduces the definite article (or an *adjective*) and relates civilisation to a particular country or a particular epoch. Here, instead of talking of civilisation in general, we talk of “the civilisation of the Middle Ages”, or “the



Fig. 18 Physical manifestation of Renaissance civilisation in St. Peter's, Rome

civilisation of France" (or, of course, French civilisation). What is meant is "the artistic and intellectual aspects and other signs of elevated living" of the particular epoch or country. But here it is accepted that instead of there being one recognisable quality of civilisation, there are different civilisations in different countries and different ages.

Thirdly, there is a meaning associated with the nineteenth-century development of the social sciences which we have already noted. Civilisation (always with adjective or indefinite or definite article) is used in a rather technical sense by anthropologists and sociologists to describe a type of human society which is clearly distinguishable from its opposite, a primitive or barbaric society. The distinguished archaeologist and historian, V. Gordon Childe, spoke (see page 31 of *What Happened in History*) of civilisation appearing as the result of an 'urban revolution' 5,000 years ago in the alluvial valleys of the Nile, the Tigris-Euphrates, and the Indus, resulting in the transformation of some riverside valleys into cities supporting "a new urban population of specialised craftsmen, merchants, priests, officials and clerks", "Writing," Childe continues, "was . . . a necessary by-product of this urban revolution which ushers in civilisa-

tion and initiates the historical record". Anthropologists and sociologists today would in the main not accept Childe's linking of an "urban revolution" with the appearance of civilisation, though there is more agreement that one of the signs of civilisation in this technical sense is the keeping of written records. In fact sociologists and anthropologists disagree among themselves about what exactly are the distinguishing features of a civilisation; but for the moment it is enough to note this meaning which distinguishes a particular type of society (a civilisation) from its barbaric predecessors.

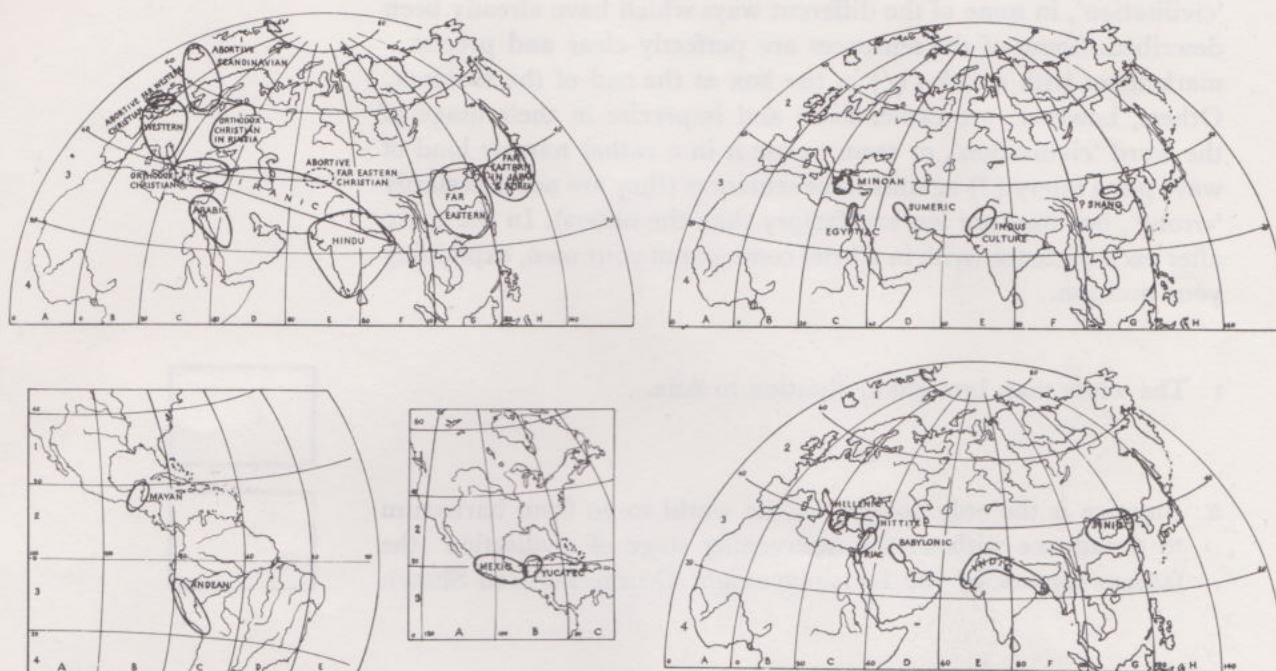


Fig. 19 Toynbee's twenty-one civilisations

It is really in this sense that the word *civilisation* is used by the famous author of the massive, multi-volume *A Study of History*, Arnold J. Toynbee (see *The Nature of History*, pages 83–87). Toynbee describes a civilisation as the smallest "intelligible field of historical study", noting that these fields are called civilisations to distinguish them from "primitive societies". Toynbee has identified twenty-one civilisations, past and present: Egyptaic, Andean, Sinic, Minoan, Sumeric, Mayan, Syriac, Indu, Hittite, Hellenic, Western, Orthodox Christian (in Russia), Far Eastern (Korea and Japan), Orthodox Christian (main body), Far Eastern (main body), Iranic, Arab, Hindu, Mexic, Yucatec, and Babylonian. Toynbee argues that these civilisations came into being as a result of a process which he describes as Challenge and Response, that is to say, it is when a primitive community meets the challenge of particularly hazardous geographical conditions that it makes the great leap forward into civilisation. He then sees each of these twenty-one civilisations as going through similar patterns of growth and decline. Most historians, as well as anthropologists and sociologists, have rejected the larger implications of Toynbee's work; and certainly it could not be taken as accepted that if we talk of "a civilisation", we must mean one of the twenty-one civilisations identified by Toynbee. On the other hand for anyone interested in the broader study of the humanities there is much that is stimulating and enlightening in Toynbee's *A Study of History*. Of greatest importance, perhaps, is his success in taking us away from our traditional Western-orientated view of

civilisation and of history. In discussing, apart from the two civilisations which we probably do know something about (Hellenic – or Ancient Greek – and Western civilisation), nineteen others about which you probably know very little, Toynbee does bring out very clearly that there is an infinite richness and variety of human civilisation far beyond the confines of the Western civilisation familiar to most of us.

Exercise

Listed below are a number of sentences which use the word 'civilisation', in some of the different ways which have already been described. Some of the sentences are perfectly clear and precise – mark them with a tick (✓) in the box at the end of the sentence. Others, however, are rather loose and imprecise in their usage of the word 'civilisation', or seem to use it in a rather narrow kind of way: put a query (?) against these sentences (they are not necessarily 'wrong', but they are less satisfactory than the others). In the space after each sentence write in a brief comment of your own, explaining your decision.

- 1 The white man brought civilisation to Asia. ☐
- 2 America is the only country in the world to go from barbarism to decadence without the intervening stage of civilisation (the famous remark by the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw). ☐
- 3 We are fighting this war to save civilisation (British Government statement during the Second World War). ☐
- 4 *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* (the title of a famous book by the Swiss scholar Burckhart). ☐
- 5 Throughout the seventeenth century there were men, as there are still, who never doubted that their own civilisation was the only civilisation. ☐
- 6 Flush toilets are as essential to civilisation as magnificent town halls. ☐
- 7 Professor V. Gordon Childe was fascinated by the unique quality of European civilisation. ☐
- 8 African civilisation does not exist before the arrival of the Christian missionaries. ☐

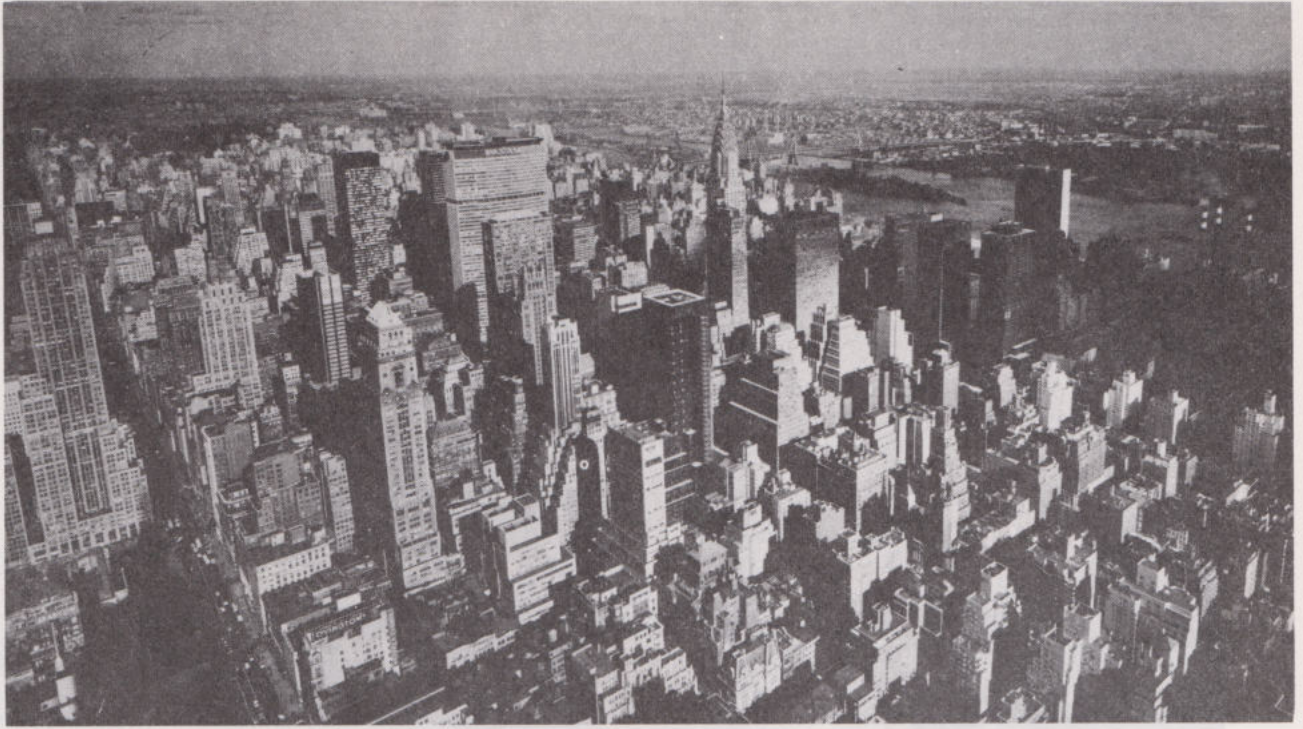


Fig. 20 Modern civilisation: Manhattan, New York



Fig. 21 Early British Bronze Shield



Fig. 22 Western civilisation reaches China:
the Opium War

Answers

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| 1 | <input data-bbox="216 1077 365 1178" type="text" value="?"/> | 5 | <input data-bbox="859 1070 1008 1171" type="text" value="✓"/> |
| 2 | <input data-bbox="216 1216 365 1317" type="text" value="?"/> | 6 | <input data-bbox="859 1209 1008 1310" type="text" value="?"/> |
| 3 | <input data-bbox="216 1357 365 1458" type="text" value="?"/> | 7 | <input data-bbox="859 1350 1008 1451" type="text" value="✓"/> |
| 4 | <input data-bbox="216 1498 365 1599" type="text" value="✓"/> | 8 | <input data-bbox="859 1491 1008 1592" type="text" value="?"/> |

- 1 Certainly it is clear enough that by 'civilisation' the author really means "Western civilisation", but I have queried this statement because of the implication that the only civilisation is the white man's civilisation and that Asia had no civilisation of her own.
- 2 This is a typical Shavian remark, witty but imprecise. Obviously what Shaw has in mind is our very first definition of civilisation, but I have queried the statement because I feel that it does not really stand up to close inspection.
- 3 As a popular, and indeed propaganda statement, this is valid enough, but again the implication clearly is that there is only one civilisation, that is to say Western civilisation.
- 4 Here we have a very precise, if limited, usage for the word as

explained in our second definition – that is, the artistic, the intellectual, and the refined aspects of a particular epoch and country.

- 5 This is actually an excerpt from Sir George Clark's *The Seventeenth Century*. It is perfectly acceptable since Clark is not saying that there was only one civilisation, but simply, what is true, that men of the seventeenth century *believed* this to be so. (It is worth remembering, when you are reading *Early Modern Europe* that Sir George Clark generally uses the word in accordance with the first definition which I gave.)
- 6 This is a perfectly sensible, and perhaps even salutary, statement. But when you examine it you will find that civilisation is used in rather a loose way: it is used, as Sir Kenneth Clark uses it, to imply a general *quality* of refined living, but of a rather limited sort. What is really meant is that "flush toilets are as essential to *modern society* as magnificent town halls". Many fine civilisations have, of course, flourished without flush toilets.
- 7 This is a precise and scholarly use of the word in the third sense, a civilisation as an intelligible unit of study (though not one which Toynbee would accept).
- 8 I find this statement extremely dubious. Presumably what is meant by 'civilisation' here is "a state distinct from barbarism", but, as we hope to show in the next unit, Africa long before the European settlements had types of civilisation very different from barbarism.

In this course we are concerned to study various aspects of man's activities and the inter-relationships between them. Next week we will look briefly at an entirely different kind of civilisation from the Western civilisation you are used to. At the end of the course we will study what we have called "industrialisation and culture". But apart from this you could probably manage quite well without using these difficult words, though of course they do often come in useful. When you see them being used by someone else take care to discover what meaning is intended. If you do use them yourself be equally careful that you know what you mean. We could in shorthand way say that this Foundation Course is concerned with *civilisation* and with the *cultural* aspects of man's activities; that is why it has been important in this unit to explore the various meaning of these words. But the important thing is, not playing around with definitions and meanings, but getting on with the study of the activities themselves, whatever names we pin on them.

A. M.

Notes

Notes

HUMANITIES: A FOUNDATION COURSE

Introduction

- 1 Humanities and the Study of Civilisation
- 2 [The Yorubas of Nigeria]
- 3 Technology, Society, Religion and the Arts: some questions
- 4 The Artist and Society

History

- 5 What History is, and Why it is Important
- 6 Primary Sources
- 7 Basic Problems of Writing History
- 8 Common Pitfalls in Historical Writing

Literature

- 9 Introduction to Literature (Part I)
- 10 Introduction to Literature (Part II)

Art

- 11 } Introduction to Art
- 12 }

Music

- 13 } Introduction to Music
- 14 }

Form and Meaning

- 15 } Form and Meaning
- 16 }

Socrates

- 17 } Which was Socrates?
- 18 }

What is a Gospel?

- 19 } What is a Gospel?
- 20 }

Vasari

- 21 } Giorgio Vasari: Renaissance Art-Critic and Art-Historian
- 22 }

Hamlet

- 23 } Shakespeare's *Hamlet*
- 24 }

Descartes

- 25 } Descartes: The Father of Modern Philosophy
- 26 }

Mendelssohn

- 27 } Mendelssohn's Rediscovery of Bach
- 28 }

Industrialisation

- 29 } The Industrialisation Process:
Part I: The Railway: The Evolution of the Machine
- 30 } Part II: How the Railway System was Created
Part III: Glasgow: Transport, Mechanisation and Society
- 31 The Debate on Industrialisation
- 32 Is Man a Machine?
- 33 } Art and Industry
- 34 }
- 35 } D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow*
- 36 }

- L1 Introduction to Logic (Parts I-IX)
- L2 Introduction to Logic (Parts X-XVIII)

